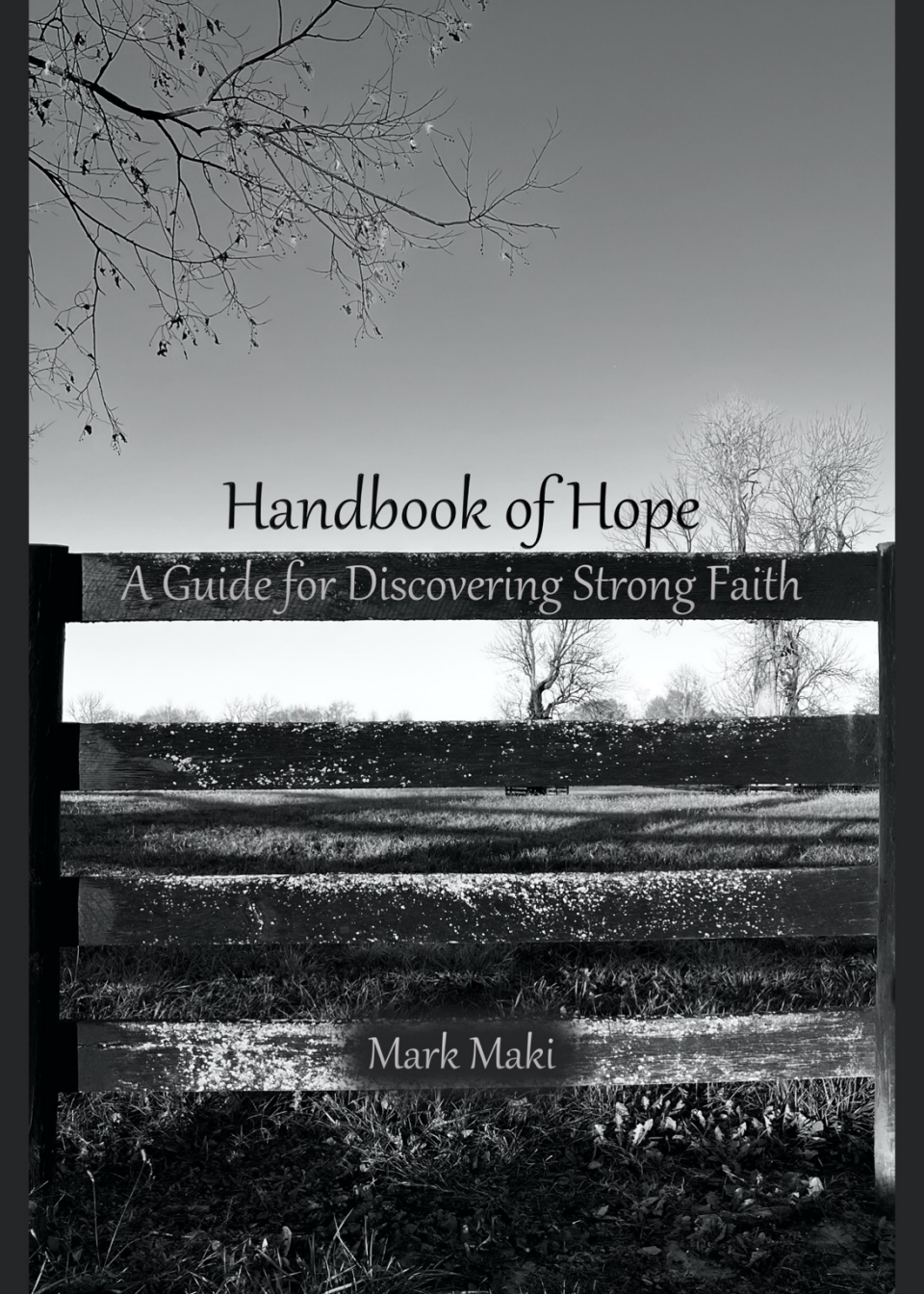


A black and white photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a wooden fence with several horizontal rails. The fence is covered in a layer of small white flowers or blossoms. Behind the fence is a grassy field. In the background, there are several bare trees and a clear sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Handbook of Hope

A Guide for Discovering Strong Faith

Mark Maki

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Foreword

Handbook of Hope: A Guide for Discovering Strong Faith is a must-read for anyone seeking verifiable answers to big questions centered around the real meaning of life. In essence, the book is straightforward and point-blank in addressing subjects such as why we are here, who is God, His plans, His purposes, truth versus error, and spiritual growth.

If you are a lost soul, an agnostic, a spiritual seeker, a new Christian or even a mature Christian with a desire to find yourself standing on more solid ground regarding the Holy Bible and the irrefutable teachings of Jesus Christ, Handbook of Hope is for you.

I write all of this because this book definitely delivers on its promise to lead you to “discovering strong faith.” Strong is the key word here. I also know the author, Mark Maki, as he is my youngest son and a

PK (pastor's kid). I know his life's spiritual journey, and he has written these chapters as a way of taking your hand to walk with him and ponder the powerful truths he has discovered. Why not hang on for a little while? My promise is that you will be challenged, and that's a good thing.

-Pastor Alan Maki (retired)

B&H Publishing author of "A Choice to Cherish" and "Written on Her Heart"

Chapter 1 – Freak Accident or Divine Design?

The questions and topics examined throughout this book have garnered an ample amount of my consideration, investigation and assessment. I've searched the deepest depths of the human heart and mind in an attempt to understand God on a deeper level. In the end, no matter how zealously enthralled a truth-seeker like myself becomes, my conclusions are firmly planted in the truth of the biblical chronology of antiquity. So, in the process of writing this book, I found myself trusting in the Holy Word and Holy Spirit for guidance, discernment and understanding. Because of that fact, I trust that these pages are pleasing to Almighty God.

“Dear God, please speak to the hearts of those who pore over this book. Use these pages to bless your

flock and to deliver any shackled or lost souls into sweet redemption through Jesus Christ. Amen.”

In this chapter, I’m going to be talking about science, astronomy, faith and life. To begin, I want to ask you something of utmost importance – who created our universe and who created the very first atom? More importantly, why? How could something be created from nothing? Why does anything exist at all? Why are you even here on this planet called earth? These are all interesting questions, and I really want to dig into this.

You see, to be an atheist or to outright deny God’s existence, you’d literally have to have faith that “nothingness” created all of this. You’d have to believe that, in the very beginning of it all, there was a blank plain of empty space, an endless void of nonexistence which would mathematically equate to zero. From zero, that nothingness would have to design, construct and create presence, not only in the form of matter but in the actuality of time and place. An empty realm of

non-creation would have to somehow create, but that goes against all scientific plausibility. How can anything not follow its own rules? It would take something outside of itself, outside of its defined regulatory system, to change what's conceivable or possible.

Imagine a single atom arriving on a blank plain, and that atom turning into two atoms, and then three, and then millions, until eventually becoming a planet, a galaxy, a universe and beyond. Tell me this, how did one atom suddenly turn into an entire planet? How did that first planet create other planets and galaxies millions of miles away? Do you know what the likelihood of that is, and how long it would take to go from the very first atom to an endless Omniverse of universes, galaxies and planets?

Again, how did the very first atom or any of its inner components (proton, neutron, and electron) just magically appear? How did atoms actually originate? Was it simply a "POOF" as they emerged in the here

and now for the very first time in history? Where is here and now, anyway, and why would such a dwelling place even exist for these random elements to spawn? For what purpose was the very first atom invented, and how could its conception be feasible without a grand Creator? How can matter be developed by anything other than an immaterial being in the form of a God? It takes even more faith to believe that this miraculous world was created by nothingness than by a powerful and brilliant designer.

Think about it: besides God, what else could bring animation into an un-animated realm, and what else could breathe life into an uninhabited darkness? There must be a why, a how, a what, a when and a Who. That Who is unquestionably God as it would take an immaterial architect to engineer the first material thing such as an atom, a planet, or a galaxy.

Let's be real: the Big Bang would wipe everything out rather than create intricacy, complexity and design. If you analyze any other catastrophic event throughout

our history such as earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions or nuclear bombings, you'll see widespread annihilation and shocking aftermaths, yet all of these past disasters combined would be but a speck of dust thrown into a dust devil when compared to the Big Bang.

As you think about it, when has an explosion ever created intricate beauty, because that's what this amazing earth has. This world has endless wonders that we seemingly take for granted such as sky, forests, oceans, rivers, mountains, and the very existence of life itself.

If a macrocosmic explosion happened such as the Big Bang, then these things wouldn't even exist at all; they would have been destroyed and driven into utter chaos. Everything in existence goes by the principal of 'Order to Chaos,' such as plants deteriorating or humans aging and dying. These things never happen in reverse as it's impossible to create order from chaos.

For instance, a volcanic eruption doesn't suddenly turn into a perfectly reconstructed mountain top.

If you truly believe that the universe was created by a big bang, then you're suspending the belief that Point A consisted of nothing and Point B consists of everything. If such a theory is possible, then please create a TV from nothing right now, or better yet, why not just imagine a house and make it appear out of thin air. You can't do it, can you? Well, why not? That follows the same basic principles as the Big Bang, so what's the problem? Let's be honest, we can deduce that that's impossible and follows a preposterous theory, yet many biblical cynics still claim that nothing created everything. Not many scientists would like such a decree: how the Big Bang erupted from nothing, yet which of them were actually present to witness and/or verify that? Fun fact: no eyewitnesses existed! Unlike the Big Bang, humans actually lived through the biblical events: spectators observed Christ's death and resurrection; a man and a woman walked in the

Garden of Eden; a family survived the global flood; and the Ten Commandments were delivered to God's people.

Atheists cannot trust their own intellect because, if their anti-God/anti-Creator theory is correct, then they weren't actually designed to think logically; intelligence would be an unexpected and miraculous consequence of a freak accident with monumental proportions. The human brain would've developed entirely by chance through millions of random processes, making one's cognitive efficacy inadvertent and untrustworthy. Factually speaking: True intelligence requires a Designer as the human mind is far too sophisticated, technical and finely tuned for any other explanation.

Honestly, human beings should extend much more reverence to the Mastermind behind their encompassing reality. To single-mindedly deny God's hand in everything and persistently suggest that our universe originated from nothing is extremely

disrespectful to His majesty. God's ingenuity was creation's invisible key. His conceptualization formed the blueprint for all of life's specification, triggering an orchestration of countless formulation; divine instruction begot materialization, and that's the true story of origination.

“When witnessing a sunset that's far greater than the paintings of man, how could one determine that it hadn't come from an artist's hand?”

A theory that's even more commonly accepted by atheists and scientists alike is this – since the commencing of time, there were tiny particles, light, and a ball of energy subsisting in a three-layer, ever-present construct. With no drastic changes in their evolution or any expansion to notate (succeeding trillions of light-years), these tripartite constituents suddenly detonated without cause in said “Big Bang.” Well, to the theorists, philosophers, deep thinkers, and truth-seekers who have faith in this wild presumption, I present these inquiries:

1) If a celestial deity didn't initially create these tiny particles, energy and light, then how exactly did they attain these aforementioned states and/or how could they have always existed and thrived?

2) If these constituents were ever-present and not actually conceived, then why didn't they erupt billions or trillions of years earlier? Why wait through an infinity of times past or an eternal reversal through yester-light-year?

3) What triggered a macrocosmic explosion after an endless prolongation? Where is the cause and effect in this unreliable hypothesis?

4) What massive energy source could have fueled these particles, giving them enough power to form everything in outer space upon their eruption?

Here's what I think: men have such a strong desire to be "all-knowing" that they will suggest radical ideologies, theorize dubious philosophies, and manufacture fictitious realities in order to form their own "truth." Ultimately, they don't want to have to

answer to an all-powerful God so they'd rather resort to something much weaker and inferior like a spiritualistic or scientific approach. The ironic part is, if God hadn't created everything for us to observe, analyze or study, then science wouldn't even exist. "Theories" and "hypotheses" may sound like professional terms but their equivalents are: opinion, idea and belief.

When someone begins a conversation with "My opinion is" or "My feelings are" or "My belief is," I can't help but state that feelings do not dictate or create our reality, they're just an emotionally charged construct that often evolves by irrationality. Your beliefs, or lack thereof, will not change the facts of how this universe came to be. Opinions are not purely factual or consistently dependable.

"Human beings cannot alter, restructure or replace God's immaculate design, nor can one's feelings trump how our Creator intended things to be."

Many scientists agree that the universe and planets are slowly winding down, like a clock losing its power or a solar system losing its energy. This would certainly point to a beginning, where everything was wound up and given its full capacity, not from an evolutionary development which took trillions of years or an uncontrolled explosion with no creative genius or artistry behind it.

If the planets have always existed (for billions or even trillions of years) and were never actually created, then it would only be logical to think that they should remain eternally the same with an unlimited amount of useful energy. We definitely shouldn't be able to see these changes happening before our very eyes or within our limited lifespans if these planets have always been around. So, we can rest assured that the brilliance that's beaming from everything around us was sparked by God Himself.

Did you know that astronomers will now admit that the universe appears stretched out? Did you also know

that the Bible stated this long before these “experts” figured this out?

Isaiah 40:22 – “*It is* He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants *are* like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.”

Isaiah 44:24 – “Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: ‘*I am* the LORD, who makes all *things*, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself.’”

Jeremiah 10:12 – “He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion.”

Which of the following men had more intelligence or brainpower than God? Albert Einstein, Johann Goethe, William Shakespeare, Nikola Tesla, Galileo Galilei, Thomas Edison, Carl Gauss, James Maxwell, Isaac Newton, or Leonardo da Vinci? God gave every man and woman a brain, and we’re all limited to our

mind's capabilities and aptitude, even the abovementioned geniuses. To put it simply, we cannot go beyond what is humanly possible or comprehend things that aren't tangible, and we certainly are incapable of knowing things better than God Himself.

But, what about you? Do you believe yourself to be smarter than Almighty God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit? Do you think that you can outwit your own Creator? That would be awfully foolish, would it not?

Jeremiah 8:9 – “The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; so what wisdom do they have?”

What about the disciples, prophets and kings who wrote the scriptures? Would you ever claim to have more knowledge than these historical men who walked with Jesus, heard His teachings firsthand, and wrote the gospels? Remember, these biblical figures relied on God's guidance, direction, influence, and oversight when writing the Holy Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16 – “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

2 Peter 1:20-21 – “...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Bible is the best-selling book of all time and the first thing ever printed on a printing press, and for good reason. The words filling up its pages are awe-inspiring, all-powerful, heart-wrenching, spiritually divine, historically consequential, and in my summation, incontestably true. There is no other book in history which has been so deeply studied, interpreted, translated and deciphered. One can look up any passage online with a computer and find it singled out and painstakingly explained, but one cannot do so in such a thorough manner with any other book. In

other words, the Bible is the unrivaled, unequalled and unmatched Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 – “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Let’s talk innovation and design. I will boldly declare that God created this reality, and everything in existence originated from His authority. He invented time and it was so, imagined planets and they were so, designed creatures and let them grow. The very essence of life itself was spawned by His majesty. From material to immaterial, from what’s visible versus invisible; whether physical, spiritual, or emotional, or as seen in this life or the next; all fall under His glory and radiate Omnipotent power. You could call this “The Blueprint of Universal Conception.”

Genesis 1:1-5 – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’ And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.”

God’s handiwork isn’t just all around us, it’s within us, too. He breathed energy, animation and life into our individual bodies. Faith, hope and love – sentiments crafted by Him. Breath, cognizance and sentience – all possible because of Him. Siblings, parents, and children – conceived and provided by Him. Past, present, and future – the timetable that’s unequivocally His. Every single thing, such as mathematics, radio waves, brainwaves, electrical currents, weather patterns, molecular systems, the magnetic field, the water cycle, sounds, vibrations, musical notes, and

human anatomy, are only achievable through Almighty God's creative hand.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 – “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

Colossians 1:15-17 – “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

To conclude this chapter, please ponder something. We come from such a magnificent reality, and with such a pivotal recognition, how could anyone doubt the probability of a heaven? Our universe is mind-blowing, with a myriad of planets inhabiting all sectors of space, so what is not possible for our Creator God?

Tonight, take a minute and look up at the grandiose expanse above your head and ask yourself, “Is anything too tall a task for the same Creator who coordinated that starry wonder?” Materiality is just a preview of God’s limitless works and infinite wonders.

Romans 1:20 – “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

If you’re reading this book and want to fully understand salvation (and the sole pathway to the kingdom of God), then check out the passages below for an in-depth explanation:

Romans 10:9-13 – “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, *‘Whoever*

believes on Him will not be put to shame. ' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For *'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'*”

John 3:16-18 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ‘He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.’”

1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Matthew 10:33 – “But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”

Acts 2:38 – “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Jeremiah 25:5 – “They said, ‘Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.’”

Titus 2:11-14 – “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.”

1 Peter 3:18 – “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to

God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”

John 6:47 – “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”

Revelation 3:20-21 – “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

Isaiah 55:6-9 – “Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”

Luke 9:26 – “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father’s, and of the holy angels.”

Ephesians 2:8-10 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

John 3:3 – “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”

Here’s a summation of salvation: every person needs to earnestly repent of their wrongdoings and put their faith/trust in Jesus Christ, thus being *born again*. It isn’t an individual’s works that get them into heaven, but it’s God’s gift to mankind, based exclusively on someone’s faith and repentance. Good works, righteousness and a virtuous lifestyle are aftereffects

(and a result) of that genuine faith. These positive attributes and enriched morality are derivatives of a renewed heart/soul after receiving the Holy Spirit (which come to us by faith and genuine sorrow for sin).

Matthew 16:26 – “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Amen and amen.

Chapter 2 – Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

My intentions with this book are as follows: to revitalize peoples' outlooks, to broaden one's perspicacity, to rekindle and/or strengthen an individual's faith, and to give clearer insight into the God that humanity has been searching for (or yearning to understand).

Amid the six sections of this book, I want to answer the most difficult and commonly asked questions, one of them being: why do bad things happen to good people?

With such an inquiry, the first thing that comes to mind is – what is good? Furthermore, what would be considered “good” to a perfect and holy God, and who among us could meet that criteria? Fortunately for us, the Bible gives us a definitive answer. Scripture

affirms that we're all sinners and we all fall short, so none of us are even close to being "good."

Romans 3:10-12 – "As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.'"

Ecclesiastes 7:20 – "For *there is* not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin."

1 John 1:8-10 – "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

Alleging that someone's a good person is not only a false declaration, it's totally unbiblical. The fact is, no human beings are naturally good in the eyes of the Lord, and that's because of mankind's sinful nature and their relentless disobedience.

Romans 8:7-8 – “Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Just because someone seems loving or morally decent from an outsider’s perspective, that doesn’t mean that they’re sinless or perfect by any legitimate criterion. More often than not, individuals are inundated by a plethora of secret sins that they’ve gotten really good at hiding.

“All it takes is a single sin to splinter moral excellence.”

Proverbs 21:2 – “Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts.”

Luke 14:11 – “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

If I went to interview people on the streets and asked them a series of questions, most individuals would claim to be a good person, but stating something

doesn't make it factual and self-righteous
proclamations won't ever save anyone's soul.

*“In the end, no amount of perceived goodness will
justify a man's sinfulness.”*

Romans 3:20-26 – “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 – “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Several months ago, a friend reached out to me to discuss something that happened to her as a child. She had been molested by a member of her church and the man’s atrocious act made her avoid houses of worship for the majority of her life. She asked me why God would allow such a terrible event and why He didn’t immediately punish the man. It’s not an easy question, by any means, but here’s the gist of what I told her (it will hopefully help in answering some similar questions that others may have):

For starters (and most importantly), nothing that happened to you was your fault whatsoever. The shame and guilt aren’t yours to bear, they’re the offender’s alone. He was solely at fault (and you were just an innocent victim). You went through something that changed the trajectory of your life, and not by your choice. The passage below is crucial in this as it leaves

no doubt of the impending punishment that will come for whomever abuses a child:

Luke 17:2 – “It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.”

This travesty didn't happen because of God, but by the sinful nature of man. I wholeheartedly empathize with you and understand your desire for immediate retribution, but you can trust in the biblical promise of judgment and justice for all.

God's wrath is steadily building up toward all evildoers; no evil deed will go unpunished for the unrepentant hearts of those who reject God. God knows all and sees all, and every being in existence will have to face Him one day. Vengeance will have its day and nothing malevolent will be left standing, so we can trust in the annihilation of immorality. Wickedness will burn and will continue burning for all of eternity. That's a punishment far beyond anything we could muster (or even imagine).

Romans 2:5 – “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.”

Romans 12:19 – “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

Exodus 14:14 – “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

Revelation 6:16-17 – “They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?’”

Psalms 78:49-50 – “He unleashed against them his hot anger, his wrath, indignation and hostility—a band of destroying angels. He prepared a path for his anger; he did not spare them from death but gave them over to the plague.”

Isaiah 13:9 – “See, the day of the LORD is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.”

Micah 5:15 – “I will take vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations that have not obeyed me.”

If it seems like God is waiting too long to act, it's because time is different for our Creator. He has a greater purpose for humanity and an extensive timeline of planned events that have to take place. God's objectives are far bigger than a single life. He cares about every one of us, but His purpose spans endless generations with billions of intertwining pathways. As scripture tells us, one day to God is like a thousand years to man.

2 Peter 3:8-13 – “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting

anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”

I want you to consider something – if God had chosen to destroy sinners several thousand years ago, we wouldn't even have been born let alone have families. Therefore, we should be grateful that God waited (all this time) to give each of us a chance at life. Every day, more people come to Christ and are saved, so that's why God has been so patient.

Whenever we face adversity or debauchery, there's another culprit who we generally overlook and rarely accuse: the devil. Satan can infiltrate anything, from political parties to police departments, from hospitals to fire departments, from public schools to households; utilizing his influence, persuasion, demonic oppression and even possession. To him, it's all fair game.

Corporations are his to prey on, businesses are his to corrupt, and you can guarantee that he'd gleefully weasel his way into our churches; employing sin and temptation as his golden ticket.

Some of Satan's objectives are to provoke the congregation, create division, ignite resentment, and pervert the weak. He loves putting faith in a bad light and conveying that negative public image, thus distracting people from the real purpose of Christianity: having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

When a believer performs a heinous act or an entire church crumbles, the devil wins that particular battle. It's not God who's stirring the pot or sparking

depravity within these Christian communities; it's demonic temptation, influence and oppression. The devil craves a church's collapse as he wants to drive as many people away from God as possible, using the most spineless, cowardly and lukewarm believers to fracture sacred grounds.

One degenerate at a single church isn't a reflection of all the kindhearted believers (who let the Holy Spirit guide them) or the wonderful churches they attend. Ultimately, we're nothing like our perfect Savior, Jesus Christ. No matter how much we try, we cannot share in His likeness as we're tainted by our sinful nature. Nobody is good or righteous, but the heart of a fully devoted believer will yearn to be purer, finding rebirth through Jesus Christ and direction from the Holy Ghost.

I honestly believe that the greater your faith grows, the easier it'll be to let go of the past, focusing solely on your present and your future (with God by your side). I had a friend who allowed her past to

completely destroy her present. She let childhood memories torment, suffocate, consume and defeat her. This negativity has dictated her entire life, casting a dark shadow over her children and marriage. Sadly, it turned her into an abusive person who's constantly plagued by addictions. No amount of therapy has helped her as she's fallen into a self-degrading cycle (a recurring nightmare that affects everyone around her). In conclusion, the past can completely destroy someone if they let it. Allowing anger, sadness, depression and hatred to fester, or letting it build and build until it becomes all-consuming, will totally ruin a person.

The best thing we can do for positive change is fully trusting in the Lord. Doing so won't make life a cakewalk, but it will undoubtedly give us a better perspective when dealing with hardship. The advantages are incomparable: a heart transformed, a soul reborn, a mind restored, and a more virtuous set of eyes. My advice would be to passionately seek God,

consistently strengthen your relationship with Him, and continue moving forward; not back peddling into negative past-times. Trust me, they're not worth revisiting mentally.

Through spiritual growth and rejuvenation via the Lord, a victim may find the ability to forgive, a fundamental step in moving forward. This doesn't mean befriending your antagonist or keeping in contact with them, but your internal transformation will accelerate the healing process. God forgives us of every sin (if we put our belief/faith in Christ) and in turn, He expects us to forgive those who've sinned against us.

Matthew 6:14-15 – “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

When things are going really well and people are feeling comfortable, it's easy to trust in God, but when things become uncomfortable, it's even easier to blame

God, reject Him, and lose faith (this would be fair-weather faithfulness). Being a Christian isn't an easy walk; it's quite the opposite, actually. Jesus' disciples were executed in brutal fashion: beheadings, crucifixions, stonings and so forth. Knowing that they'd likely die martyrs, their faith could've easily waived, but instead, it emboldened them even more.

“Through trials, Satan tries to crush us whereas God uses these tests to refine, grow and mature us.”

This next passage (written by the Apostle Paul) shows how difficult the life of a believer can be. Try to imagine living in such a time and place, where you're constantly persecuted for your beliefs, your faithfulness, and your ministerial pursuits:

2 Corinthians 11:24-29 – “From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of

the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn *with indignation*?”

Life is a test for every one of us, with good and bad circumstances filling up each day. How we choose to live and what we decide to do during conflict is what really matters. Will we let hardships rule over our lives? Do adversities dictate our attitudes, our reactions and our viewpoints, or are we stronger than that? Is our faith so resilient that we'll trust in God no matter what happens to us? If not, it should be.

“Don't let the measure of your faith be based on your circumstances.”

2 Timothy 2:3 – “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

Matthew 24:13 – “But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

I’ve already shown passages which reveal that nobody is considered good. The fact is, we’ve all broken the Ten Commandments (and many of the other 603 commandments) written throughout the Holy Bible. Here are some of the various sins that you might’ve committed: lying, stealing, cheating, using foul language, looking at women/men with lust, taking God’s name in vain, hating one another, being envious, having pride, getting caught up in addictions, being a drunkard, idolizing anything other than God, sexual immorality, divination, etc.

So, now that I’ve presented the biblical truth, which tells us that we’re not as good as we think we are, we can dig deeper and try to understand why bad things happen to us. The easiest methodology is to start with the curse of sin:

Genesis 3:14-19 – “So the LORD God said to the serpent: ‘Because you have done this, you *are* cursed

more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.’ To the woman He said: ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you,’ saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: ‘Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.’”

Summation: sinfulness cursed humankind, forcing men to work the fields and women to have labor pains. It brought forth death (in place of earthly immortality) and cursed the land that we're living on.

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Hebrews 9:27 – “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 – “The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our sinful nature and refusal to obey God's commandments have transferred this curse of pain, suffering, death and destruction from generation to generation.

I've heard several people ask, “If God created all things, then didn't He create evil, too?” Simply put, God is perfect, flawless, and holy, so no, He did not create evil.

James 1:13 – “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He himself tempt anyone.”

1 John 2:16 – “For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”

When people ask these kinds of questions, they’re not considering what the alternative could’ve been – a prison with no independence or liberty of thought. If free will was prohibited since birth, we’d be anatomic robots (compelled to obey and comply). There would be no emotion, and our love for God would be imposed and coerced. Everything would be mandatory and we’d have absolutely no choice in the matter.

That’s not how God wanted things, though, as such restrictions wouldn’t equate to genuine love. He enables us to willingly choose Him for ourselves. Therefore, we can either A) accept our Lord and spend eternity with Him in heaven (because we proved to Him that we actually want that) or B) reject Him, mock

Him, scoff at His existence, and spend eternity separated from anything that's righteous, pure and holy.

Without God, there's no goodness, holiness or morality left. He is the source from whom such characteristics spawn. We won't maintain and/or keep positive attributes when we're separated from our Creator. They'll quickly dissipate, and we'll turn into hateful and vile creatures in hell.

On that note, let's figure out who's to blame for your hardships. The answer can take many shapes and forms, so let's postulate over applicable inquiries and you can try to answer this conundrum yourself:

1) Have your own decisions led to your struggles? For instance, have you set yourself up for failure? Did your lack of work ethic lead to a job loss? Did you get kicked out of school? Have you been in and out of jail? Do addictions dominate your life? Does your attitude push family and friends away? Do you surround yourself with bad company?

Oftentimes, we are our own worst enemy and are solely to blame for our problems. That's a hard pill to swallow, but it's actually beneficial to come to such a realization as it can lead to positive change.

If you always selected hazardous materials to sleep on: nails, barbed wire and hot coals, then you shouldn't be dumbfounded by the torturous nights that followed. You can apply this analogy to all of the bad decisions throughout your life, ones which led to miserable outcomes. Simply put, poor choices garner disastrous results. Don't fold your best hand and live out your bluff. Don't take the rocky road when the clear path is right in front of you.

"A conscientious mind takes responsibility for every action, decision and exploit, showing full accountability for the outcome."

2) If your hardships weren't caused by you, then could they be due to the people that you surround yourself with? Do your family members, friends or

colleagues bring negativity, harm, destruction or malevolence into your life?

1 Corinthians 15:33 – “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”

Proverbs 13:20 – “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.”

Psalms 119:115 – “Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God!”

Proverbs 27:17 – “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”

Psalms 1:1-2 – “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.”

The worst crimes (murder, rape, trafficking, terrorism, mass shootings, kidnappings, robbery, and arson) are all works of humankind. People are often vile and merciless toward one another. Men/women are the only culprits to blame for lawlessness, hate

crimes and foul undertakings. These individuals choose to live that way.

I want you to understand something, though: these people WILL be held accountable. God will remember their sins (those with an unrepentant and unremorseful heart) and He will judge them accordingly.

Matthew 12:36 – “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.”

Diseases, sicknesses, cancers and malformities commenced with mankind’s sin, and they’ll continue to expand and worsen due to pollution, genetically modified foods, chemicals, microplastics, contaminants and so forth. Sin is the real cancer – the curse that keeps on cursing. It’s no coincidence that STDs and AIDS often come from sexual immorality.

“Our iniquities can amplify our afflictions.”

If we look closer, we’ll see that it’s often the stingy and tightfisted corporations that are the main culprits of our deteriorating health. They are the ones who

haphazardly destroy crops, contaminate our air, poison our waters, and defile our bodies (and all for a quick buck). Impoverished regions are riddled by hunger and neglect while prosperous nations waste millions of dollars on mansions, sports cars, jewelry and handbags.

So, one question remains: should we blame a Deity who's the very definition of perfection or the rebellious human race which craves impiety and live perpetually destructive lives? Who is our worst enemy here: Satan, ourselves, or both?

Chapter 3 – Why Doesn't God Intervene?

In this chapter, I'll be sharing a multi-layered perspective that will hopefully hit home for the studious and open-minded, whether someone is spiritual, religious, scientific or otherwise.

When facing hardship or experiencing loss, there's a recurring question that will often enter one's mind: Why doesn't God intervene? As part of my response, I'm going to insert two queries of my own (for everyone's consideration):

- 1) If God doesn't intervene in your trials or rescue you from tribulation, do you immediately lose faith?
- 2) If you placed your faithfulness on a balancing scale, would it sway back and forth (depending on what you're currently going through) or hold steady?

I want you to consider something: When have you not grown from struggle or loss? Whether you realize it or not, God has used blessings and hardships to shape your character since the day you were born. He puts us right where we need to be in order to search for, discover and confide in Him, and to trust in His plans concerning our lives. The question is, will we accept/embrace God's callings (through endless signs and intervention) or outright reject Him?

“If you truly have strong faith, you'll trust in God's will over your life no matter what circumstances you face.”

Jeremiah 29:11 – “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

God is not our enemy. He wants us to succeed, to flourish and prosper, to grow and nurture a family, but most of all, to build a solid relationship with Him. We can undoubtedly trust in God's will and in His guidebook: the Holy Bible. It will renew the mind, heal

the heart, transform the soul, and totally change an individual's aspirations.

Romans 8:28 – “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Oftentimes, life's daily nuisances can be turned into positives and can even be advantageous if we have the right mindset about it. Adversity can build maturity, fortitude, humility, perseverance and faith.

2 Corinthians 6:3-10 – “Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on;

beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.”

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 – “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

If Elohim performed a miracle every time something bad happened, then nobody would face any challenges in life that would help to develop their character, strengthen their faith, further their wisdom, or appropriately test their devotion to Christ. We’d only believe in Almighty God due to His endless works and by witnessing continuous miracles in our day-to-day lives, not strictly because of our faith. Our commitment to Jesus would be merely by sight, not

through trusting in His Word or being genuinely dedicated to Him.

Time and time again, cynics will demand a plethora of physical proof, over-the-top miracles, and in-your-face manifestations (as if creation itself isn't enough), but God doesn't owe anyone anything, and He shouldn't have to solve all of our problems in order for us to believe in Him. Yahweh oversees the entire universe, so who are we to question everything that He does (when we're the ones living immorally rebellious lives)?

“How conceited must a people be whence telling Almighty God how He ought to govern His own creation?”

People don't understand the detrimental effects that supernatural interference could have on our world, especially if humankind isn't ready for it yet. For instance, altering an individual's pathway could trigger a number of unfavorable circumstances, and consequently, throw many lineages off course. You

see, it's not just what God does that can influence things, but how we react to His divine intervention. God knows exactly how we'll respond to such things and whether it would change His intended outcome for us or not.

“Every person has critical happenings that must take place in order to fulfill their earthly purpose.”

Proverbs 19:21– “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.”

Proverbs 16:1-4 – “To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the proper answer of the tongue. All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD. Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. The LORD works out everything to its proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster.”

If God's greatest servants were allowed to be tested and tried, then who are we to expect a cake walk? Do we deem ourselves as more important/special than the likes of Job or Jesus' twelve disciples? When God has

confidence in us and views our servitude/faithfulness as immovable targets, then He might tolerate such tests by the opposition because He trusts in our resilience, and knows that we'll only be strengthened under pressure. Through deep reflection, discernment and understanding, believers can reach a point of stoic maturity and an unshakable devotion to Christ.

“Perseverance in the present will beget God’s favor in the future.”

James 1:12 – “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

James 5:11 – “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”

Romans 5:3-4 – “And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces

perseverance, and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

James 1:2-4 – “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

For true believers, not even the thickest quagmire on earth could impede our movements or restrain our spirit, i.e., nothing can hold us down as we’ve been set free by the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. So, no matter what we face in life, we can be encouraged and of good cheer, knowing that Jesus of Nazareth, the sacrificial Lamb, is our ultimate redemption.

John 16:33 – “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Matthew 11:28-30 – “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.”

2 Corinthians 4:8-10 – “*We are* hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”

1 Peter 5:10 – “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

FYI, it was Satan who tested Job, not God, but far too often, people overlook the devil and his minions (the fiends who orchestrate all of the chaos). Likewise, if you're appalled by the deeds/acts of other human

beings, why would you ever attribute such behaviors or impiety to the Lord (as if blaming Him for their evil) when He isn't even a participant nor has any involvement in said affairs? Essentially, you'd be holding a spotless Deity accountable for the bloody hands of another.

Summation: Men will always find a reason to turn their backs on God: any privation amid the journey, any injustice by criminal enterprises, any adversity from the devil, or any trial due to natural causes. Only One receives the blame, the same One who has given mankind everything.

“Negativity can fill you with a rotten perception, one that’s empty and accusatory.”

Consider this: we've been given the same free will as lawbreaking delinquents, but with our independence, we've chosen to do things that we deem are less vile and/or grotesque. For just a second, though, imagine how even our most trivial sins appear to a faultless God.

Isaiah 64:6 – “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Romans 3:19-20 – “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.”

When confronted with wickedness, some people will expect or even demand that God eradicate evil, yet these same individuals will protest and balk at God’s sentencing: hell. So, which is it? Do you want God to judge this world or not? Ought He punish sin or not? Should He be just or unjust? Most importantly, where should He draw the line on punishable offenses?

To understand why hell is permanent, consider this: virtuous traits do not exist in Hades. God-given attributes (all morals and ethics) are absent from the

damned; without His presence, they cannot remain. Void of love, joy, hope, peace and faith, everyone stuck in perdition can expect to be overcome by rage, hatred, hostility, animosity and immorality. This darkness, which has sought after all men, will engulf them at last. The torture of hellfire will only intensify the madness. So, a shorter sentencing is impossible as redemption cannot be found in such a place.

Matthew 13:41-43 – “The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

Mark 9:43-48 – “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ And if your

foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’”

If we were given the authority to select which sinners Yahweh would condemn, would we only choose the murderers and rapists, or should we also include the liars, thieves, idolaters, adulterers, fornicators, cheaters, diviners and blasphemers, i.e., the rest of mankind? Whenever we are included in a punishable group, it's suddenly too harsh, right? Anyone who asks for unbalanced justice or demands special treatment (such as receiving the only free pass) are being hypocritical.

Job 15:34 – “For the company of hypocrites *will be* barren, and fire will consume the tents of bribery.”

Job 27:8 – “For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he may gain *much*, if God takes away his life?”

Job 36:13 – “But the hypocrites in heart store up wrath; they do not cry for help when He binds them.”

At times, people may become bitter or even resentful over God’s lack of intervention, especially when it comes to stopping evil, but these folks aren’t considering what a full stoppage would actually entail. If God destroyed all forms of immorality, then they themselves would be destroyed, too. See, we’re quick to judge our neighbor but not ourselves. WE, the human race, are what formed the black fog around God’s once perfect earth. WE are the reprehensible stains upon the formerly unblemished. WE are fully responsible...every single one of us.

Men and women alike, whether young or old, will typically ignore God until they want something from Him. They’ll reject Him on all the good days yet get

mad if He doesn't intervene on the few bad ones. They resemble the friend who nobody fancies, the one who reemerges when seeking a handout.

Expectant of spoils, our pampered generations necessitate lavish lifestyles, stress-free routines, and naturally, endless good fortune; a colony of privileged moochers who rarely are satisfied, fulfilled or appeased. They demand, expect and take, command, anticipate and seize. This archetype doesn't desire an authentic relationship with God but will still insist on His blessings, gifts, rewards and support. Let's set a better example than these and no longer be guilty of the same. Seek God on all of the good days, not just the needy ones, and bless Him regularly (in return for all that He does) with gratitude and love.

“Earthly indulgence offers temporal happiness; heaven promises infinite joy.”

Psalm 34:1-3 – “I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; the humble shall

hear *of it* and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.”

Psalm 66:8 – “Oh, bless our God, you peoples! And make the voice of His praise to be heard.”

Psalm 68:26 – “Bless God in the congregations, the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.”

Luke 24:52-53 – “And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.”

Psalm 145:1-3 – “I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness *is* unsearchable.”

Psalm 150:6 – “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!”

Sometimes, you’ll come across people who’ve lived through the absolute worst circumstances, yet somehow, they’ll remain joyous and loving. On the

flip side, you can meet folks who were born into peachy lifestyles with unlimited wealth and possibilities, yet they'll be angry and miserable. What it all boils down to is perspective and attitude, and the greatest boost in morale one could ever attain comes from Jesus Christ.

“God-given joy can carry us through anything.”

Romans 12:12 – “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

Philippians 4:4 – “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

John 16:24 – “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

No matter our earthly struggles or the type of family that we're born into, isn't life still a blessing? Our go-to might be to blame God or the world for our problems, but instead, we should convey gratitude, thankfulness and appreciation for everything that we've been given.

Philippians 4:6-7 – “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

If you're reading this, then you've been given eyes to see, a brain that thinks, a heart that beats, and lungs that breathe. Do these biotic miracles hold no value to you? Are these capabilities not praiseworthy enough? Have you rejoiced over such things? I honestly think that we take these godsendings for granted. Few of us give high enough honors or bestow an adequate amount of gratefulness to the God who gave them. Every day, we should be giving thanks and showing how indebted we are to our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 – “...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Colossians 3:17 – “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Psalms 136:1 – “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. *His love endures forever.*”

If a family member avoided you for years, ignoring all forms of contact and thwarting any involvement in their lives, you’d eventually have to appease them by saying, “Okay, best of luck to you.” Similarly, people who shun God (and want to live self-centered, me-focused lives) will eventually have His hands of protection taken off of them, akin to Him stating, “Best of luck to you, child. You think you know what’s best for your future and want solitary isolation, so that’s exactly what you’ll get. Don’t be surprised when it all comes crashing down.” In other words, if you continuously push God away, then you shouldn’t expect Him to bail you out. God’s not your genie in a bottle whose sole purpose is to grant your every wish.

Psalm 50:22 – “Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with no one to rescue you.”

Deuteronomy 32:18-20 – “You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. The LORD saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. ‘I will hide my face from them,’ he said, ‘and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.’”

Jeremiah 1:16 – “I will utter My judgments against them concerning all their wickedness, because they have forsaken Me, burned incense to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands.”

Proverbs 1:24-33 – “But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a

whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. ‘Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD. Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm.’”

All of humanity’s struggles and pain (going back thousands of years) will have been worth it in order for Jesus to bring His people to an eternity of love, purity, perfection and beauty. That is what He’s been waiting on for so long, delaying His return (the second coming) so that more people will follow Him and get to experience that jubilant ever after.

Revelation 3:11 – “Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”

Matthew 24:44 – “Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

1 Peter 5:4 – “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

Earthly hardships are rather insignificant when compared to the rewards that we’ll relish in heaven, and besides, we can’t anticipate how our current struggles will influence and/or shape our future. No matter how tough this present life gets, there will always be better things waiting for us in heaven.

2 Corinthians 5:1 – “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.”

John 14:1-3 – “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

The general consensus regarding death is strictly negative, but everyone who trusts in Christ Jesus is promised an afterlife of heavenly delight. As a believer’s eyes close, they will instantly be reopened in heaven – a place with no more misery, suffering or death.

“The agony and grief faced by Jesus’ followers on earth today dissolves into infinite happiness in heaven, tomorrow.”

2 Corinthians 5:8 – “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

The next life will offer far greater rewards and fulfillment than our present-day positions, situations or circumstances, so that's one reason why God may not intervene. We typically think of death as catastrophic (and it can be), but since there is no torment, sorrow, sin or evil in the heavenly infinite, then what we'll gain is immeasurable. God knows us better than we know ourselves, so He foresees when to call us home. Time is up when He decides. We should never seek death, but we shouldn't fear it, either. With that said, here are two questions to mull over:

1) Is this short earthly lifespan more important to you than your eternity?

2) Do you value your flesh more than your soul?

Revelation 21:4-5 – ““And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’ Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’”

Colossians 3:1-4 – “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Isaiah 51:6 – “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, the earth will grow old like a garment, and those who dwell in it will die in like manner; but My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will not be abolished.”

Due to our sinful nature, our carnal ensembles act as restrainers; our life-forces are bound by these anatomic straitjackets – ‘tis the hindereth of the epidermis. These meat suits limit us from our full potential: spiritual metamorphosis. So, you can look at death with only a negative viewpoint or with a hope of receiving your newly improved body, which will have

the gift of eternal life, will be supernaturally strong, will have access to the spiritual realm, and will be given insights into God's perfect plan: past, present and future.

1 Corinthians 15:42-45 – “So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.”

1 Corinthians 15:51-55 – “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this

corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?’”

Philippians 3:20-21 – “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 – “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

The days of old have been befuddled and distorted by doubting multitudes. The truth is, God has intervened countless times throughout human history (as corroborated all across scripture), but by the hardheadedness of man, people still refuse to believe that He even exists.

If you traveled to a time period that was only a couple generations out from any major biblical event, you would already come across a bunch of skeptics who didn't believe in any of the tales which preceded them, even if that meant rejecting firsthand accounts from their own relatives and/or trustworthy sources. God showed us His power in the global flood, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the parting of the Red Sea, and through Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection; yet for many, these miraculous events became supposed fairytales only a couple generations later.

“Uncertainty and disbelief are what keep men in bondage, their own small-mindedness enslaving them.”

Numbers 14:11 – “Then the LORD said to Moses: ‘How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?’”

2 Kings 17:14 – “Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God.”

We cannot possibly fathom the amount of disasters/misfortunes that God has saved us from or prevented. Even with the world’s constant denial and rejection of Him, God still offers redirection for all of our pathways, leading us down the most beneficial roads. Each and every day is a gift from the Almighty, so a “thank you” here and there would be appropriate and warranted.

It’s time to get to the meat and potatoes of this chapter. Who has suffered more, you or God? Humans

are constantly complaining about how tough they've had it, but let's take a moment to consider the billions of tragedies that our Creator has endured. He has witnessed every evil deed ever committed: murders, mass shootings, terrorist attacks, serial killings, hate crimes, racist acts, pedophilia, sexual immorality, human trafficking, abortions, wars, assaults, thefts, blasphemy and idolatry. Through the lens of the Divine, imagine how these atrocities must look.

By way of personal experience, most of us understand the torture of mourning a loved one, but imagine the billions of deaths that Yahweh's had to grieve. We are His children, so of course He mourns us, especially when we're living in distress or die tragically. In the gospels, Jesus grieved others' afflictions on numerous occasions, demonstrating His love and personal connection to every one of us. The weight of the world is on His shoulders and He has borne it all. Our pains are His pain, our sufferings are His suffering. He's been right beside us through every

single tragedy. There's nothing that our Lord hasn't seen, felt, or endured. Whatever hardships that we've gone through, He has gone through a trillion-fold. With all honesty, our hearts should ache for what humankind has put Him through.

Now, let's talk betrayal, because God has been betrayed more times than all other living beings combined. The truth is that the vast majority do not listen to God the first time or follow the plans that He has laid out for them. To prove this, all we have to do is look at the first two human beings: Adam and Eve. They were given one simple commandment and couldn't even get that right. I can't think of a single prophet, disciple or man of God who hasn't denied, betrayed, doubted, criticized, resisted, sinned against, strayed away from, or opposed the Lord's plan at one point or another. Furthermore, Satan and a third of heaven's angels turned against God due to their envy and pride. Betrayal after betrayal, it's downright sickening and shameful.

Our Maker has had to look upon this earth, His beautiful creation, and watch mankind destroy everything that they've laid their hands on. But, even after an incalculable sum of unworthiness, He still chooses to love us rather than making us all disappear. That's grace, compassion and mercy.

The following inquiries are directed at parents (regarding their descendants), but for non-parents, these could signify any other sort of relationship or kinsfolk:

- 1) Would you sacrifice your child/children for depraved sinners?
- 2) Would you permit your offspring's suffering if it were for ungrateful fools?
- 3) If you knew that he/she would be beaten, whipped, and crucified, would you ever hand over your innocent baby?

That's what our Heavenly Father did for us yet the general populous doesn't even want to hear about it. Jehovah gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to

die for all of our sins. But, rather than revering Yeshua, the Savior of mankind, a majority of our world has since laughed at Him, mocked Him, and used His name as a curse word. Imagine the insult...imagine the disgust.

It would take an unbelievably loving God to stifle that justified wrath; to refrain from wiping us all out after our cruel and cold-hearted responses toward His gracious, sympathetic, and compassionate gift. He could've easily done away with this earth and everything in it, but luckily, we're still here. What a loving and merciful Architect, indeed.

Romans 9:22 – “What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?”

Psalm 85:2-3 – “You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.”

1 Thessalonians 5:9 – “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

God is searching for the individuals who will humble themselves, abandon their pride, and voluntarily pledge allegiance to Him (through faith, contrition and belief). It takes a sincere, selfless and principled person to bend the knee, but such attributes produce ardent followers of Christ. Servitude isn't slavery; it's a grand display of meekness and reveals adoration for our Creator.

Unrelenting self-reliance is equivalent to a choke hold – asphyxiation by pride. If people would just let go of their bravado and give Jesus a legitimate chance, they would receive the purest form of love and strongest familial bond they could ever attain. Egotism is what holds men/women back, whereas the death of ego would open up more hearts to Christ.

2 Chronicles 7:14 – “...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and

seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

James 4:6-10 – “But He gives more grace.

Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

Only you can send yourself to hell by denying Jesus, just as you alone can elect to trust in Him and inherit heaven. Yeshua has already paid the cost, so the keys to eternity are in your own hand. Will you use the key that’s stained with scarlet, onyx, and crimson at hell’s gate, or use the key that’s glimmering with gold, diamond and pearl at heaven’s gate?

In wrapping up this chapter, I'll give you one final thought concerning why God doesn't always intervene. As insignificant and unrighteous peons, we humans are rather quick to criticize our Lord for not intervening, but who are we out helping? How often do we get involved? What aid or support have we provided? Should we not hold ourselves equally accountable?

YHWH is always watching over and evaluating our lives (for the final judgment), observing whether or not we help our fellow man. Thus, we should ask ourselves: How can WE fight against or stop crime? How can WE aid our local communities? How should WE be serving others? How might WE make a difference? How can WE make our Heavenly Father proud? Rather than always asking God how He's going to intervene, we should look in the mirror, and ask, "How will I intervene?"

Chapter 4 – One God, One Truth

People trust math, science and history books – blindly accepting everything that they assert, yet these same individuals will doubt the accuracy of the Holy Bible without any evidence to refute it. So, my question is, what is the actual basis of your knowledge and/or what formulated your intellectual foundation? Even when it's not gathered from the Bible, a majority of our modern education stems from textbooks – ones which hold far less value than God's holy Word (as no other writings are God-breathed and are only inspired by man).

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 – “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of

Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

Proverbs 21:30 – “*There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the LORD.*”

Here’s a follow-up question: when it comes to God and faith, what shaped the core of your beliefs? Was it based on personal philosophies or prejudices, or were you properly informed by the most reliable source: the Holy Bible? Also, was your knowledge acquired through private interpretation (which can often lead to misunderstandings and a twisting of the Word) or through scriptural reality: discernment by way of the Holy Spirit?

2 Peter 1:20-21 – “...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Psalm 119:160 – “The entirety of Your word *is* truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.”

Nowadays, people are always talking about “their truth,” but in the end, the higher and ultimate truth (Jesus Christ) will be all that really matters.

John 14:6 – “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”

Only one reality exists, and mere opinion can’t change what’s absolute. Feelings can be fictitious and subjective, but the verity of existence is unchangeable.

“The earth’s structures cannot be affected or altered by somebody’s emotional state. The make-believe cannot control and/or supersede the real world.”

Proverbs 17:16 – “Why *is there* in the hand of a fool the purchase price of wisdom, since *he has* no heart *for it?*”

Psalm 111:10 – “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*. His praise endures forever.”

1 Corinthians 1:19-20 – “For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

Two opposing ideologies cannot be true (not when it comes to creationism and the rationale on why we have life); it all boils down to a singular truth. Opinions can’t change the particulars of our conception no matter how strongly someone feels.

Proverbs 2:6-8 – “For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; *He is* a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints.”

Isaiah 11:2 – “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”

James 3:13-15 – “Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.”

No matter how preferential we are, we still won't have a say on the rules or conditions of life. We can certainly try, but we'll never control the natural world or any of its systems. For instance, we can't change how everything's been designed: the distance of the sun, the earth's rotation, gravity, time, the longevity of a lifespan, human anatomy, or our own mortality. We were made how God intended us to be and we're beholden to the system that He set forth (and fully subject to it). So, we can either abide by God's rules

and follow His instruction or fight against His everlasting establishment until we ultimately lose and end up in hell.

Psalm 22:27-28 – “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.”

Job 12:7-9 – “But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?”

Isaiah 41:4-5 – ““Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD—with the first of them and with the last—I am he.’ The islands have seen it and fear; the ends of the earth tremble.”

Psalm 89:9-11 – “You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them. You crushed Rahab like one of the slain; with your strong arm you

scattered your enemies. The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth; you founded the world and all that is in it.”

Regardless of an individual’s outlook, they’ll still be at the mercy of God’s judgment, facing the consequences of their actions. The disdainers who reject, hate and scoff at Jesus Christ will still kneel before Him one day, whether they want to or not. Their fussing won’t change who runs the world, nor where they’ll end up when they die. We’re all subject to the Creator and His universe, not the other way around.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11 – “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”

In this modern era, society is filled with people who exalt themselves as the “gods” in their life, and when they do believe in God, they make up their own twisted version of Him (an alternative god who fits to their

liking). They don't revere the one true God written about in the Holy Bible, but praise an abomination fabricated within their own thoughts. These charlatans pervert scripture so that it conforms to their lifestyles and narratives, sharing biblical passages about love while simultaneously shunning all verses alluding to sin, hell and repentance. They'll reference the cushy stuff over and over again, all the while rejecting God's other 613 precepts/commandments.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 – “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

2 Peter 2:1-2 – “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will

follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

Hosea 4:6 – “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”

Proverbs 12:17-22 – “He *who* speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise *promotes* health. The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment. Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy. No grave trouble will overtake the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil. Lying lips *are* an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully *are* His delight.”

What it all boils down to is this: these individuals refuse to accept that they’re sinners (like the rest of us)

and that they'd actually have to repent in order to be forgiven, and not only repent, but actually mean it as God knows our hearts. Simply put, they won't admit to any wrongdoing, nor give up their daily pleasures.

2 Corinthians 7:10 – “For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Jeremiah 25:5 – “They said, ‘Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.’”

Acts 3:19 – “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”

Psalms 32:5 – “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah.*”

1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Some people will claim to know/love Jesus and even believe in some of His teachings, but in the end, He's not even valued enough to put forth a nominal level of commitment. Placing God second, these folks carry on in their habitual sin, choosing a repugnant lifestyle over a genuine relationship with Christ. That's why they alter and twist the Word, so that they'll feel better about their transgressions against the Lord. These passages are for those misled souls:

Hebrews 10:26 – “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”

1 John 2:3-5 – “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps

His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”

Titus 1:16 – “They profess to know God, but in works they deny *Him*, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”

Galatians 6:8 – “Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

“By accepting sin, you are consciously going against God’s commands and law; by affirming sin, you are deliberately denying God’s Word and truth.”

The culture has deceived our younger generations into believing that right and wrong are subjective, and that there’s no absolute truth in life. In following this lie, many adolescents refuse to accept that there are consequences for actions, and therefore, they can lack a guilty conscience and deny any sort of responsibility. Real life has become a video game to some of these

kids, making lawlessness, crime, violence and wickedness abound.

Jeremiah 9:3 – “‘And *like* their bow they have bent their tongues *for* lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know Me,’ says the LORD.”

Jeremiah 7:28 – “So you shall say to them, ‘This *is* a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.’”

Here’s the problem: if you don’t have a relationship with God and aren’t led by the Holy Spirit, and you don’t care about the law, either (so aren’t restricted by it), then what would be the basis of your morality? On what principles would you stand?

John 3:19-21 – “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be

exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Scripture reveals that our hearts are deceitful (as they’re naturally wicked), so if that was your sole guidance in life, there’d be no quantification of right and wrong, and there’d be no reason to care. The scary thing is, that’s how most peoples’ lives are steered today.

Matthew 15:19 – “For out of the heart come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

The trouble with this culture’s “live and let live” dogma is that it’s equivalent to handing someone a gun and saying, “Do whatever feels right.” The question is, how many people would use such a statement as the hair-trigger to harm others or perform unimaginable acts – all under the banner of supposed equity/inclusion (sometimes a two-faced lie propagated by disingenuous corporations)? Diversity, in any

legitimate form, is unquestionably good, but sadly, some of these organizations aren't genuine in their stance or support. It's often a front and/or publicity stunt which propels an unobstructed, unregulated, and anarchic freedom/mindset.

Put into action, these fundamentals are what led to two men having sex inside of a Senate building (without ever facing charges), and gave the CEO of United Airlines the leeway to prance around on all fours in a drag queen show. These aren't work appropriate actions, nor excusable public displays. Men/women in any kind of leadership, authority or national spotlight should exhibit wholesome content, and carry themselves as honorable and professional role models. Irrespective of one's support for these communities, this unfettered exposure is unjustifiable.

These ideologies (at times, authentic in their roots) are oftentimes misrepresented by play-actors and counterfeit advocates who want the go-ahead, support and permission from the general populace to do

whatever is most desirable to them, without consequence (even if it involves children); all under the mantra of oneness. These individuals, including sexual predators, may chant “live and let live” from the rooftops, but freedom of expression is only permissible if your thinking aligns with theirs or grants them the liberty to break every law/commandment from God.

“An exclusion of God results in an inclusion of Satan.”

1 John 4:5-6 – “They are of the world. Therefore they speak *as* of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

Some of the things mentioned could insinuate the LGBTQIA+ community so I want to make something very clear. Christians should pray for these folks and always extend heartfelt love and compassion toward them (especially during ministerial pursuits and evangelistic proselytism). The LGBTQ community is

filled with individuals who are just trying to find the proper pathways in life. No man/woman is more worthy of redemption than another and Christ's ultimate sacrifice can set anyone free from sinful bondage. Everyone can find salvation and be born again by earnest repentance, genuine sorrow for sin, a change of heart/mind, and belief/trust in Jesus Christ. God knew that we would never make it into heaven through our own merits, not with the shackles of iniquity digging into our wrists. This is why He sent His Son.

"We're all messed up and that's why we need a perfect Savior."

Romans 12:2 – "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

The further this world strays from God, the filthier it becomes. Mass shootings, at the present moment, are a daily occurrence. News reports grow darker, such as

juveniles getting killed for ringing a stranger's doorbell or walking across a neighbor's yard. I've read of five incidents like that this week.

Proverbs 10:23-25 – “To do evil *is* like sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom. The fear of the wicked will come upon him, and the desire of the righteous will be granted. When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked *is* no *more*, but the righteous *has* an everlasting foundation.”

Isaiah 59:2-4 – “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity. No one calls for justice, nor does *any* plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.”

Daniel 9:13-14 – “As *it is* written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that

we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. Therefore the LORD has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice.”

Isaiah 33:6 – “Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, *and* the strength of salvation; the fear of the LORD *is* His treasure.”

Wickedness multiplies as confusion and irrationality overflows. Naive citizens still don’t see it and deem this to be a normal progression of civilization. Religious truth was the only thing holding malevolence back, but as the world turns its back on God, welcome to hell on earth.

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 – “And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

John 8:44 – “You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

Romans 1:24-32 – “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to

do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”

To end this chapter on a lighter note, here’s something that’s a bit more encouraging: genuine Christians should make every effort to uphold Christ-like values and be overflowing with love (the greatest virtue of them all). Some blokes might imagine and/or insinuate that tender characteristics come from a place of weakness, when actually, they come from the most powerful form of truth in existence. That truth, and everything that comes with it, is backed by an all-

powerful God who wields justified wrath and commands an army of angels with flaming swords. Just as the angels are strengthened/armored by the King of kings and Lord of lords, we're reinforced and fortified by Him, too.

Ephesians 6:10-20 – “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to

quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

In wrapping up this segment, I can’t imagine a greater or more significant passage than this:

John 8:31-32 – “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”

Chapter 5 – To Judge or Not to Judge?

Sadly, many professing Christians do not follow, adhere to, or obey Christ's teachings, nor do they demonstrate piety in their actions. They may favor and/or cling to deceptive doctrines, and thus, propagate religious falsities. As the saying goes, there are two sides to every coin, but in these particular cases, they have two distinct faces:

1) The self-proclaimed Christian who judges, criticizes and condemns everyone while offering no love, kindness or compassion at all. The tenderness of Christ is absent from their attitudes and speech.

2) The Pretender who exhibits love (in a cultural and worldly way) yet lacks scriptural integrity and bears zero fruit. This archetype will do anything to appease the masses: supporting, advocating and

affirming immoral/ungodly lifestyles. They won't just welcome sinners, but rather, encourage their sin.

Departing from Christ's stern declaration: "Go and sin no more," they will oppose Him, saying, "Go ahead, sin some more."

A succinct categorization: They impart judgment with no love or love with no truth, either suppressing God's Word (His commandments and law, i.e., biblical truth) or withholding His principles (ethics, morals and decency, i.e., love, compassion and kindness). This may not always be intentional but will conclude in such a way. Every Christian and/or legitimate follower of Christ will make mistakes and stumble, but the ones who purposely remain in these two categories are not living according to God's Word.

As sincere and authentic representatives of Christ Jesus, we must find the proper balance between love and truth, and by demonstrating each element correctly, we will unmask the imitators and liars. We should ask the Holy Spirit for guidance/discernment

and place God's inerrant texts above feelings, opinion, perception or ego.

Our motivations (when sharing the gospel) should be heartfelt and sincere, not critical or degrading. Salvation is both glorious and inspirational, and thus, should be conveyed with enthusiasm and glee. Believers ought to be concerned over others' walks and yearn for their redemption. We should use our allotted time to honor/worship God, to spread the truth, and to lift others above ourselves, recognizing the magnitude of everyone's eternity.

Philippians 2:3-4 – “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

When we find ourselves in a debate or quarrel, whether it's in person or online, we should hold ourselves to a higher standard and persist with grace, kindness, compassion and humility until the conversation has concluded. If we cannot remain calm

and cordial, a biblical expectation and a believer's duty would be to walk away from it. Trying to win an argument via confrontational means will not please God, but rather, make Christianity look appalling. Unfortunately, many alleged Christians can come across as rude, nasty or mean-spirited. If we're not careful and/or use the wrong approach, we will push droves of people away. Negative impressions are awfully difficult to repair, so as spokespersons, servants and disciples of Christ, we MUST do better.

“Christ’s message was not intended to be hateful; it offered life-changing truth and was articulated with love.”

Philippians 1:27 – “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.”

2 Timothy 2:14-16 – “Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.”

Some discourse necessitates a bold, direct and forthright response. We don’t need to run away from, be intimidated by, or remain silent among mockers and scoffers. Akin to a perfectly brewed coffee, our responses should be thought out and meticulously refined, combining the cold hard biblical facts with civility, respect and decorum. In our dealings with the secular world, we should take into account the blindfolds of mankind’s sinful nature, which masks the truth like an N95 respirator during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Remaining silent in our beliefs is a crime to humanity. How can someone discover the truth if they never hear it? Don't be a voiceless Christian who sits idly by, watching as crowds of people march right into hell. The devil should be contested and opposed at every front, not handed easy victories due to our inaction. It is how we present biblical truth that will either A) open peoples' eyes or B) slam them shut.

Mark 16:15 – *“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’”*

Matthew 24:14 – “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

1 Corinthians 9:16 – “For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

Our purpose is to spread the gospel in a collective effort in order to save souls, not to pacify others or support their depravities. Under no circumstance should we water down the message or be in opposition

to the Holy Bible. Never downplay the truth but make sure that your evangelistic efforts come from a loving place. When your words are met with cruelty, refuse to mimic such behavior. Boldly speak up but don't attack anyone personally, don't swear, and back everything up with scripture. In the midst of difficult discussions, keep this question in mind: What Would Jesus Do?

2 Timothy 2:23-24 – “Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.”

Proverbs 15:18 – “A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.”

Proverbs 17:19 – “Whoever loves a quarrel loves sin; whoever builds a high gate invites destruction.”

Proverbs 26:20-23 – “Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down. As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife. The words of a gossip are like

choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts. Like a coating of silver dross on earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart.”

The greatest guidance and/or instruction we possess came directly from Christ Jesus. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus’ teachings were direct, uncompromising and straightforward yet indubitably loving. With that in mind, here are a few steps you can take to break through complex barriers and achieve greater outcomes:

1) Be a beacon of encouragement, lifting others up rather than tearing them down.

2) Offer assistance and support wherever it is needed: in the community, in church, or at work.

3) Establish relationships built upon trust. By doing so, deeper fellowship will follow.

4) By being an honorable and dependable friend/co-worker, you will be afforded more opportunities to share the gospel as others will want to know where your love, joy, peace and grace come from.

Ephesians 5:8-9 – “For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth).”

Matthew 5:14-16 – “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

It is helpful to specify why we share our faith: due to our love for others, our concern for their souls, and to convey the hope which Christ is offering. The goal is not to be judgmental but to spread the Word of God to anyone who hasn't heard and/or considered it yet.

“Understanding the biblical depiction of right and wrong and sharing that information abroad isn't meant to be judgmental but to impart wisdom, enlighten and educate.”

In our evangelistic efforts, we should search for ways to share the biblical truth while simultaneously extending love (sometimes tough love), but even if our delivery is positive and uplifting, people will still be offended by the Word of God. In such cases, all we can do is plant the seed and let the Holy Spirit take over from there. Keep these passages in mind during difficult conversations and your words will be better received:

1 Peter 4:8 – “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”

Ephesians 4:32 – “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a – “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It

always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

Our society can be extremely blasphemous, so when someone shares the gospel, they are susceptible to heated interactions. The powers of darkness will continue to lash out, fighting tooth and nail to silence the ultimate truth: Jesus Christ. A rule of thumb: if you’re constantly offending everyone, that’s not a good sign, but if you never offend anyone with God’s Word, that’s also a red flag. Jesus was hated without a cause and forewarned us that we would be hated, too, especially for preaching the gospel.

John 15:18-21 – “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all

these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.”

As I ruminated over this topic, I witnessed something on Facebook which I felt was share-worthy. A girl on my friend's list, who happened to be into the occult, posted a story about her adversity, poverty and depression, but gravest of all, how she'd been contemplating suicide. In response, a so-called Christian commented, “Serves you right! That's what you get for not believing in Jesus.”

It was an unbelievably cruel and insensitive response. Criticizing and/or shaming someone when they're at rock bottom is one of the worst things a Christian can do (and it isn't Christ-like at all). Heartless condemnation won't bring anyone to the Lord; it will just push them further away. What this particular girl desperately needed was empathy, kindness, gentleness, comfort and encouragement. The door was open for some meaningful dialogue and life-saving advice pointing her to God; instead, the

opportunity was ruined by a vile tongue. Here's the takeaway: How we represent Almighty God is crucial as it will either benefit His kingdom or interfere with it and you'd be a fool to get in His way.

Something that's stated fairly often is "only God can judge me." Well, God will certainly judge you and it will be as punitive as you deserve and much harsher than mere criticisms from others. The Bible says not to judge lest you be judged by that same measure and that we should use righteous judgment. It is a delicate balance which takes love, compassion, humility, understanding, honesty, truthfulness, discernment and wisdom. We are not Jesus Christ so we're not blameless, spotless or holy when casting harsh judgments upon others. Therefore, it is imperative that every word out of our mouths is justified and in no way hypocritical.

Matthew 7:1-5 – "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be

measured to you. ‘Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?’ How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

John 7:24 – “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

Matthew 18:15-17 – “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

If you are a Christian who desires to be able to properly handle heated exchanges, you should ask yourself, “Have my interactions reflected positively on Christ? Do my words hold any redemptive value? Are they God-honoring? Does my messaging stand on solid ground scripturally? Have most of my conversations ended in an enriching, inspiring and elevated way or does my wording need some work? Do I usually keep things classy and respectful or do I fail in that regard?”

One of my recommendations – always stick to sound doctrine and treat everyone like family as that will make you choose your words more wisely and carefully.

Hebrews 12:14-15 – “Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”

Hebrews 13:1-3 – “Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some

have unwittingly entertained angels. Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.”

Galatians 5:22-26 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those *who are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Here are three final verses on this matter, two of which direct us to warn others of their errors and to expose evil while the third passage says not to overstep our bounds by acting as a lawgiver:

Ephesians 5:11 – “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.”

Ezekiel 3:18 – “When I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn them or

speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood.”

James 4:11-12 – “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?”

In many ways, believers are walking a tightrope: we are **COMMANDED** to love our neighbor yet **CALLED** to share the gospel with them (which rebukes their sin and instructs them to repent). These may seem like opposing forces, yet when unified correctly, they are spiritually divine.

Chapter 6 – Oppression, Depression, Suicide and Therapy

In this section, I will discuss six critical topics: stress, anxiety, depression, demonic oppression, suicide and therapy. If you are struggling with one of these hurdles and need help mentally, emotionally or spiritually, then please read all the way to the end. While thumbing through this chapter, I pray that many may find restoration and that the Holy Spirit will bless, inspire, and reassure them while fostering positive faith-based thinking. Even if you're not dealing with the issues mentioned above, this chapter will still encourage, inform and reinforce you.

FYI, this is not a medical manual, nor is it offered as a treatment for any physical or mental ailments; however, this is a spiritual guidebook that's directed toward the soul (which can affect both mind and body

in numerous ways). I do not speak as a doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist; I speak as one who holds the keys to a fulfilling, spiritual life through Christ Jesus our Lord. I am a fervent and committed seeker of Jesus, as I'm hoping all my readers either are or will become.

Warning: there are people who genuinely need medication, clinical intervention, and psychiatric assistance. If you're one of those individuals, please seek help from a professional and obtain a referral for a specialized clinician in one of these particular fields: Psychology, Psychiatry or Neurology. Occasionally, our brains can have chemical imbalances and/or be plagued by various infirmities such as neurological disorders or PTSD. These are not things to play around with or to be taken lightly, so seek appropriate assistance in order to safeguard your mental health. Do not feel ashamed over a condition that's irresolvable on your own as it could happen to anyone.

Note: If you are a family member or friend of someone who's dealing with these hurdles, show them compassion and don't minimize/dismiss what they're going through. Some ailments are beyond understanding but that doesn't lessen their validity.

In getting to the lesson at hand, you may ruminate over these five questions:

1) Do you currently have a lot on your plate and are you feeling overwhelmed by it?

2) Are you constantly stressed out by the pressures and/or demands of day-to-day life?

3) Does it ever seem like this world is deliberately knocking you down and trying to keep you there (at rock bottom)?

4) Do you struggle to find purpose and does that lack of direction trigger anxiety or depression?

5) Are you at a breaking point where you just want to throw in the towel?

These are not lightweight inquiries and your answer to each certainly could bear significance. For instance,

if you say “yes” to the first question, uttering “yes” to the second, third, fourth, or fifth questions wouldn’t be that far-fetched as one privation may lead you to the next. So, together, let’s dive into this subject matter and discover the surest way out.

“Consecutive crises can prompt a deeper descension into the unknown, epitomizing a bottomless pit.”

By peeling back the layers, we can unveil the multifaceted causality behind our stressors. From personal matters (health, ambitions and career) to household concerns (financial burdens, familial wellbeing and home/auto repairs) to communal worries (neighborhood dangers: robberies, assaults and shootings) to state legislative disputes (taxes, mandates and infringements of freedom) to countrywide distresses (inflation, recession and border control) to worldwide affairs (wars, pandemics and humanitarian disasters). When stacked up, one conundrum atop another, a Mount Everest-sized burden will be what

materializes. It's no wonder why anxiety, depression and suicide are surging in every country, particularly in the United States. In such a crazy world, it's rather normal to find oneself submersed in loneliness, grief, negativity, hopelessness, crisis fatigue/emotional burnout, and/or irrepressible pessimism.

“Your mindset is a by-product of outside influences, mental acumen, introspective reasoning and spiritual transcendence.”

Matthew 6:31-34 – “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.”

With that said, here is a valuable piece of advice: in dealing with your feelings, try not to be so reactive.

Take a pause, think things through, and identify what spawns a negative versus a positive response. Evaluate yourself honestly so that you can recognize your own strengths and weaknesses. For example, how well do you handle higher stress levels? Are you good at controlling your emotions? Do discouraging thoughts goad you into sinful pursuits or plunge you into destructive negativity?

“Where we are mentally is where we allow ourselves to be.”

Do not give loneliness, anxiety, stress or depression time to fester. Who wouldn't be overcome with sadness when wallowing in the dark corner of a room? Don't put yourself in those types of positions. If you already know what your triggers are, stop repeating them. The main culprit and/or responsible party for habitual depression is YOU as relapses are fast-tracked due to melancholic tendencies and woeful over-analysis. So, you need to get ahold of yourself and control your emotional state.

“When constantly alone, you are more likely to overthink things.”

Solution – avoid all triggers! You’ll know what they are. Stay away from anything that can lead to anxiety, loneliness or depression. Surround yourself with good vibes and uplifting environments. Visit your favorite people, phone a friend, go on a nature walk, begin a fitness routine, try journaling, learn another language, create new goals, and so on. Rather than moping around and feeling bad for yourself, you can choose to kick your butt in gear.

Most importantly, if you turn your eyes toward Jesus Christ and place Him as number one in your life, things will change for the better irrespective of your surroundings or circumstances. Elevate the Lord and He will take the reins. The greatest uplift in my daily grind comes from reading the Bible, listening to worship music, playing faith-based podcasts, watching GodTube and Christian YouTube content, and being in prayer.

“Nothing brightens a day more than living for God.”

Philippians 4:19 – “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”

Psalms 103:2-5 – “Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

The physical “you” functions like a decorative mask, shielding your thoughts and imaginations and cloaking any pain that you feel inside. No one can see through the pounds of flesh to the authentic being who is hidden underneath. Therefore, we cannot know or appreciate the various qualities of someone else’s soul. This is why nobody can impact hearts, souls and lives like Jesus Christ, because He literally knows every fiber of our being: the good and the bad, including

every thought, flaw, failure and sin, and yet, He still fights for us. What greater love is there than that?

Luke 12:7 – “Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

Psalm 147:3-5 – “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.”

When you are grief-stricken and/or crestfallen, it’s easier to fall victim to devilish temptation or manipulation. Satan will use things like sin, addiction, heartache, worry and depression to destroy you, so you need to rid yourself of bad habits, refuse to fall for his devices, stay as even-tempered and levelheaded as possible, and begin walking the path of a true believer. If you easily succumb to things like loneliness, anxiety or addiction, demons will not see you as a legitimate threat. To them, you are just another weak and

defenseless victim to conquer and subdue at will. So, if they've already gotten you right where they want you, you need to start fighting back and put an end to these vicious cycles.

1 Corinthians 10:13 – “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

The best way to deal with demonic attacks is to go to church as often as possible, read the Bible every day, pray frequently, and spend as much time with the Lord as life permits. These things will not only brighten your days, but they'll keep manipulative spirits at bay.

Isaiah 40:31 – “But those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Joshua 1:9 – “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go.”

No matter how resilient you are, there will always be a formidable draw toward bad habits, so we need to become much more passionate in our faith and strive for unshakable self-control. Assuming each of us desires to adhere to a high standard of morality, and the Holy Spirit bolsters Jesus’ flock with spiritual accountability, as well, all followers of Christ will be properly shepherded.

Exodus 31:3 – “And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *manner of* workmanship.”

If we cannot be lured by temptation or addiction, Satan’s army will try other means such as messing with our health, our finances or our families. Spiritual warfare is a nonstop battle that will cross thresholds and trickle into our homes.

Typically, demons will try to avoid discovery. They don't want fanfare (especially if it is negative) as humans are easier to target when they don't believe in anything or focus all of their attention on useless distractions such as aliens, cryptids, ghosts/spirits, mythical phenomenons, conspiracy theories, New Age practices, or other fallacious ideas. The reason that these folks are more susceptible to demonic influence, oppression and possession is because they are oblivious to its reality.

In addition to these mystical distractions, hordes of people become obsessed with the materialistic world, but all of the sports cars, mansions, yachts, private planes, jewelry and money on earth won't fill the void of an earthly existence without God. He is the only one who can fill that void.

“Immersed in secular entertainment and ephemeral delectation, people unwittingly bind themselves through grand illusion.”

Revelation 3:17 – “Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.”

I want to be clear about something: depression can take hold of anyone. Sometimes, it begins as a small mental battle (most of us have experienced this at one point or another) or it can escalate rapidly and become all-out psychological warfare prompted by prior trauma or a present-day conflict. Neither of these examples are my main focus, though, as I am concentrating on the spiritual warfare aspect of it all.

For instance, everyone has weak spots and/or buttons that the devil may push, but some men and women are easier targets. Through persuasion, conditioning and power of suggestion, demonic entities can compel us to be more impulsive, reckless, and sometimes, even demented. They will employ manipulative dreams and bogus visions to brainwash

the most susceptible such as psychics, mediums, diviners, spiritists, warlocks or Satanists.

Zechariah 10:2 – “The idols speak deceitfully, diviners see visions that lie; they tell dreams that are false, they give comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd.”

Do you ever hear whispers or have voices inside your head? If so, do not give them attention as that is precisely what demons crave. These malevolent spirits aspire to direct, influence and control peoples' lives, but in order to gain an individual's compliance, they'd need to take them through a multi-step process. I'll give you a breakdown of how these mischievous sprites might operate, but bear in mind, this is just an example that is based on peoples' testimonies, biblical accounts, personal encounters, and by understanding the wiles of the devil. Here are a few steps that these fallen angels may follow in order to gain our compliance, trust, and ear:

A How-to Guide for Demons:

How to Manipulate a Human

1) Study assigned human: likes/dislikes, desires, addictions, sins, weaknesses, fears, worries, sorrows, relationships, household, environment, possessions, hobbies, goals, career, education, etc.

Note: Demons can be so patient and discreet that you wouldn't even know that they were tagging along, learning all about your daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly routines. Since these fiends never sleep, they can stalk you 24-hours a day.

2) Entertain and/or consume: Utilize the internet, social media, television and music industry to distract, desensitize, condition, propagandize, entice and pervert the human subject.

3) Distress/overwhelm through chaos: Cause car troubles or unexpected home repairs, give health issues, reduce financial stability, activate family squabbles, and dismantle everything that matters to a human.

4) Dreams and visions: Appear as an angel of light in a couple of your human's dreams. If this doesn't gain their curiosity, move on to the second option: profound visions. Your two objectives (with this step) are to convince the human that you're friendly, loving and trustworthy, but most of all, that these dreams and/or visions came from God.

5) Influence: NONSTOP temptation, proposition and persuasion. Accelerate and intensify all forms of provocation, thus multiplying your target's sinful prospects. Dangle their deepest desires over their head in order to force feed every single impulse or craving that they have.

6) Oppress: Through gradual conditioning and coaxing, you will gain more access to your human's thoughts, emotions, and influence some of their actions. In order to hinder their ability to follow and/or serve God, you will need to keep them engulfed in habitual sin.

7) Possess: At this point, you will have intermittent control of the subject, giving you greater authority over their life. You can impose your will upon them by crowding their thoughts and redirecting their attention. Now is the time to give them commands, but the gravity of each offense is of your choosing: hate crime, murder, rape, mass shooting, terrorist attack, or suicide. The ultimate triumph is to drive them to self-hatred, and thus, lose the desire to live, because once they are dead, redemption through Christ Jesus is no longer attainable. **You began as their shadow but grew into their nightmare.**

“What is more devious than a devil with ambition?”

1 Peter 5:8 – “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

Did you find that list disturbing? I hope so, as it’s meant to heighten your awareness and boost your knowledge of spiritual warfare. Those first few steps

have likely happened to all of us or were at least attempted in our past (whether we knew it or not), but every one of those steps can happen to unbelievers who are not sealed and protected by Christ. Without the Holy Spirit added to us through faith and repentance, non-Christians will always be vulnerable to full-blown possession. That is the scary truth.

The powers of darkness are only afraid of one thing: Jesus Christ/God. Thus, whoever follows Him will be emboldened, supported, and protected. With Christ at the helm, you can navigate any seas.

James 2:19 – “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”

Psalms 23:4-5 – “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.”

By proclaiming the blood of the Lamb, you can command malevolent spirits to depart from you because they are powerless against the might of the Lord. The One who had turned water into wine can convert the murkiest of waters into crystal clear springs.

1 John 4:4 – “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

2 Timothy 1:7 – “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

Luke 10:19 – “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

Let's get back to the subject of suicide because there are other aspects which can drive someone to such actions besides demonic influence. Example: life becomes so tumultuous that it is hard to imagine a positive outcome or possible way forward. Most

people don't really want to die, nor leave everything behind, but life can push anyone into a corner.

Here is the positive news, which I wish everyone would consider: there are scores of pathways which someone could take, thousands of locations to which they could move, and multitudes of people who they could befriend. So, if you dislike your current situation, you should implement some drastic changes. Try everything possible before giving it all up.

If you are someone who has considered, attempted, or are planning to commit suicide, then I want to ask you a life-saving question: will you give Jesus Christ a try? Would you ever ask for His help? Sadly, some people would rather end their lives than pursue Christ, but honestly, what would it hurt to pray to Him and ask for His guidance? Shouldn't we give this option a fair shake before throwing in the towel?

Imagine how sad we must make Jesus when we give up on the very life that He gave us. I want to share something that's so important in all of this, which is to

help you realize that no one can be removed and/or separated from God (who trusts in Him) because being bonded to Him is unbreakable and eternal.

Romans 8:38-39 – “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

John 10:27-29 – “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand.”

John 6:37 – “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”

John 14:27 – “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

At any moment, a person could die from a heart attack, stroke, brain aneurysm, car accident, or even in their sleep. This impending doom can certainly be daunting, but the closer an atheist gets to their expiration date, the greater their fear will become. To a cynic, our existence is nothing more than a blip on the radar, a freak accident with no designer, backstory, or subsequent future. These nonsensical ideas imply that there are no fundamental reasons behind faith, hope, love, joy, miracles or family, and that such wonders sprung into existence by sheer luck.

“The beauty of family was destined to be eternal.”

People defend atheism as if it's an extravagant belief system, but there is nothing cool, fun or encouraging about having faith in nothing. It is honestly heartbreaking as it offers zero hope to its devotees and can actually lead to misery, bitterness,

and despair. Don't bank on an ideology which alleges that life and death have no purpose, objective, significance or meaning.

“Take away hope and the spirit fades. Take away purpose and the heart dies.”

If you ask a dying atheist whether he's prepared to cease to exist (based on his own ideology), he will admittedly say “no” and be terrified to die. If you ask him whether he's ready to be infernally damned (based on what scripture says about denying Christ), he will say “no” to that option, as well, but will claim that the Bible is full of fairytales. My question is, why would anyone remain in a belief system which cannot benefit them and offers up the worst two outcomes imaginable? Atheists will lose the race whether they are right or wrong. This isn't meant to be harsh, but rather, to shine a light on some of the key issues within that stance.

“Every manmade philosophy will crumble before the judgment seat of Almighty God.”

While on earth, most people don't want to hear about Jesus' sacrifice and will reply with, "I don't want to hear about it" or "don't talk to me about that." Yet, in hell, you can picture those same people crying, "Why didn't you tell me more?! You should have made me listen to you...I am eternally damned!"

To the non-believer who reads this: God is offering you another chance, but you are running out of lifelines. Don't simply dismiss these words or turn away due to pride, skepticism, ignorance, spite, or "just because."

"Death approaches us all, but the cold grip of impermanence traumatizes the unbeliever; their lifespan dissipates like a thief in the night."

Psalm 14:1 – "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good."

1 Corinthians 2:14 – "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are

foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Romans 1:18-19 – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.”

2 Chronicles 36:16 – “But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.”

Spirituality will not save you. New Age practices (stones, energy and astrology) cannot redeem you or forgive you of sin. False gods, who are merely fallen angels, do not have the authority to admit you into heaven. The universe never died for your sins. Humans cannot “manifest” blessings or good fortune, i.e., use mental magic to reward oneself; these are progressive forms of necromancy, disguised as beneficial so they won’t appear demonic. The “higher power” that people

speak of cannot help you as no authority exists outside of the Yahweh from the Holy Bible. There is only one way to the kingdom of God: Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12 – “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Colossians 2:8 – “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”

False religions have been used by false prophets to deceive the masses for thousands of years, telling their constituents that Christ Jesus was only a prophet, Lucifer’s brother, an archangel, or an “ascended master.” Here is the truth: Christ was and is the King of kings and Lord of lords – the Son who completes the triune God. It is telling that, when faced with a near-death experience, even so-called atheists and non-Christians are known to have called out to Jesus in a

last-ditch effort to lean on Him for heavenly help, more so than any other “god.”

Isaiah 9:6 – “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

John 1:1-3 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”

John 1:14 – “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

1 Timothy 3:16 – “Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.”

Do not bring a knife to a gunfight! That is what you get when you hire a secular therapist for a spiritual battle. Think about it: if a psychiatrist doesn't believe in the metaphysical, how can they help you with something that's spiritual in nature? Such issues are soul-deep, not skin-deep; therefore, the only thing that these specialists can do is treat the emotional trauma which stems from these otherworldly attacks.

When it comes to the supernatural, secular therapists are minimally educated or are completely uninformed, giving them a stark disadvantage concerning this matter. A clinician who is oblivious to an entire realm is like a blind man who has to critique a painting; they cannot understand the full human condition when it's separated from soul and spirit. Their expertise is generally tailored toward identifying mental disorders, dealing with trauma and offering moral support. That is their lane, and they may assist you when needing help in one of those areas.

The world of psychology is beginning to emulate the culture, so you will need to use discernment. A psychologist will advocate for self-improvement, self-reliance, self-correction, and self-healing. They may seek to place you on a pedestal and elect you as “god over everything,” convincing you to pursue perfection on your own. Self-empowerment will not have a lasting effect, though, unless Jesus Christ comes first.

“The Lord is powerful and your problems are small, so magnify Him in order to minimize them.”

A therapist informed a friend of mine that he should do “whatever makes him happy,” which is the equivalent to “follow your heart.” This is terrible advice because the things which make a person happy may be harmful to self or others.

Example 1: Alcohol, drugs and pornography may offer short-term happiness, yet at the same time generate bad habits and cause lifelong unfulfillment.

Example 2: An unhinged individual may find joy in hurting others but that doesn’t make an evil act okay,

morally acceptable, or be something that should be carried out. Henceforth, one should NOT just do what “makes them happy” as this irresponsible therapist suggested. As I have explained throughout this book and have substantiated by scripture, the human heart is deceitful and leads people astray.

You should seek a Christian therapist whenever possible. These ministers can not only help with mental and emotional issues, but also with spiritual ones. They understand the powers of darkness, will help to guide you in your journey, and will always point you back to God.

Two other options are to attend a small church group, which will cover a variety of challenging topics, or to read faith-based books which examine pertinent matters.

During the last three years, God has done a complete overhaul on my attitude and perception. I am a real-world example of how Christ can sharpen, refine and perfect. I went from being adrift to enriched, and I

am delighted to follow God's plan, whatever that entails.

I have been a Christian for most of my life, but it wasn't until I truly gave it ALL to Christ that I underwent an extensive change. It is honestly hard to explain, but I feel the difference within my heart, mind and soul.

No matter what you're currently going through, Christ can sustain you, as He's the preeminent link that is missing in peoples' lives. Only He can fill the void that you've been yearning to satisfy. Jesus offers the greatest friendship, love and protection conceivable. If you are willing to accept His sacrifice, grace, holiness, sovereignty and divinity, He will totally transform your heart and soul.

I have experienced such a transformation myself and let me tell you, it is POWERFUL and AWESOME! Worry and fear may be plentiful when on your own, but apprehension can be stamped out when you fully trust in the Lord.

Luke 12:25-26 – “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”

If you haven't done so yet, will you put your trust in Jesus today? He can restore, comfort and sustain you even during the darkest of times. Other humans will let you down, but He will not. Please take this book seriously for your own life's sake. At any hour of any day, Jesus could return to save those who believe in Him, but the unrepentant sinner will be left to suffer their fate. All it takes is genuine repentance and belief in Christ Jesus, and that is it. I hope to see you in the kingdom of God, an exquisite ever-after where purity, perfection, righteousness and love blossom.

Hebrews 3:15 – “...while it is said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’”

My desire is to maintain Christ-like values throughout my earthly tenure, so I came up with a list of virtues that Christians should strive for and attempt

to live out. You may choose to read through these at the beginning of each day as a powerful reminder:

- Be of service to others, whatever that entails (be it at work or otherwise).

- Be a generous member of society, assisting anyone who is in need.

- Be loving, respectful, compassionate and encouraging toward everyone.

- Lift others above yourself.

- Show appreciation to the family, friends and colleagues in your life.

- Be thankful for everyone and everything.

- Let the fruit of the Spirit shine within you, inspiring others as you go.

- Be a blessing to those around you, but never conform to worldliness and/or change in order to fit in.

Stand firm in Christ!

- Stay focused on the things of God, not on earthly things.

- If it can lead to sin, avoid it.

-Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in every thought, action and deed.

-Do not criticize, shame or belittle others based on outward appearance. The culture praises a person's outward beauty over inward purity, but God weighs the heart.

-Set all ego aside and display humility.

-Refuse to be offended; instead, seek to befriend.

-Be slow to anger; remain patient and calm.

-If something cannot affect your eternity, then don't whine about it continually.

-God-given joy can help you get through anything.

-Today is a new day, so show gratitude toward your Creator.

-Share the gospel and help more people to find Christ.

-Pray, read devotionals, implement Bible-time, and worship the Lord.

-Above all, love God, and love your neighbors as yourself.

Romans 12:9-21 – “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap

burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Philippians 4:8-9 – “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Doxology by Rev. Thomas Ken, 1674:

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heav’nly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

Praise God the Father who’s the source;

Praise God the Son who is the course;

Praise God the Spirit who’s the flow;

Praise God, our portion here below! Amen

Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”

From here, I highly recommend that you read the Holy Bible. It is far more important than all other books combined, as it explains salvation, creation and eternity, and it is THE comprehensive guidebook for this life and the next. I personally read these Bible translations: New King James Version and New International Version, but you'll have to find the translation which best suits you. The King James Version and New American Standard Version are known to be reliable, consistent, and accurate translations when compared to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts.

My second suggestion would be to find a Bible-believing/Bible-teaching church to attend each

week. Do your own research and find a place that you can call home.

The most important thing is to surrender your life to Christ, earnestly repent of your sins, put your faith and trust in Jesus/Yeshua, and continue building a solid relationship with Him. God be with you in your journey of faith!

King of Israel My Refuge The Messiah
 The Son of God Jesus Christ **El Shaddai**
 King of Kings My Fortress Lord of Lords
 Heavenly Father *Eternal One* THE MIGHTY GOD
 I Am *Hashem* **Yeshua** *Elohim* **He Is**
My Rock *Adonai* *Yahweh* *Holy One* My Hope
 The LORD Most High HE IN WHOM I TRUST
 Redeemer **Mediator** Jehovah Immanuel
 The Holy Spirit *Omnipotent* Omniscient *Shepherd*
 Majesty *The Lamb* Maker of All Things *Master*
My Shield Jesus of Nazareth ***My Song***
 King of the Jews *The Word* *Lion of Judah*
The Cornerstone Prince of Peace The Bridegroom
 The Deliverer *Alpha & Omega* Bread of Life Creator
 The One True God *Trinity* **SAVIOR** Jesus is Lord

Why, oh, why do we suffer? Like waves mounting up, the impact of adversity comes crashing down upon us. But, as quickly as it arrives, the water recedes and a calmness befalls the shoreline; that is, until the subsequent wave follows.

How can one survive such thrashings, let alone persevere through an aggregate of trials and tribulations? Where is Almighty God in all of this and why would He not silence the storms with His still small voice? These mysteries, albeit troublesome, should be examined with an open mind and a humble heart, but most of all, with a yearning for the absolute truth.

As we swim against the tide and fight against the undercurrents, we will explore the hopelessness of atheism, the underpinnings of depression, the wiles of the devil, and the heartache of suicide. The hefty queries may waterlog our life vests, but as things flux and flow, the answers will rise up from the deep to help God's people stay afloat.

As Jesus walked on the water and gave Peter a helping hand, Scripture will offer us a similar security, being the substantiation that all believers require.

